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Michel Foucault Historical Discourse and Revolutionary Discourse Historical discourse and its supporters. - The counterhistory of race struggle. - Roman history and biblical history. - Revolutionary discourse. - Birth and transformations of racism. - Race purity and State racism: the Nazi transformation and the Soviet transformation.

YOU MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT, last time, that I was trying to both trace the history of racist discourse and praise it. And you would not have been entirely wrong, except in one respect. It was not exactly racist discourse whose history I was tracing and that I was praising: it was the discourse of race war or race struggle. I think we should reserve the expression "racism" or "racist discourse" for something that was basically no more than a particular and localized episode in the great discourse of race war or race struggle. Racist discourse was really no more than an episode, a phase, the reversal, or at least the reworking, at the end of the nineteenth century, of the discourse of race war. It was a reworking of that old discourse, which at that point was already hundreds of years old, in sociobiological terms, and it was reworked for purposes of social conservatism and, at least in a certain number of cases, colonial domination. Having said that to situate both the link and the difference between racist discourse and the discourse of race war. I was indeed praising the discourse of race war. I was praising it in the sense that I wanted to show you how-at least for a time, or in other words up to the end of the nineteenth century, at which point it turned into a racist discourse-this discourse of race war functioned as a counterhistory. And today I would like to say something about its counterhistorical function. It seems to me that we can say-perhaps somewhat hastily or schematically, but we would still be essentially correct-that historical discourse, the discourse of historians, or this practice of recounting history, was for a long time what it had no doubt been in antiquity and what it still was in the Middle Ages: for a long time, it remained related to the rituals of power. It seems to me that we can understand the discourse of the historian to be a sort of ceremony, oral or written, that must in reality produce both a justification of' power and a reinforcement of that power. It also seems to me that the traditional function of history, from the first Roman annalists' until the late Middle Ages, and perhaps the seventeenth century or even later, was to speak the right of power and to intensify the luster of power. It had two roles. The point of recounting history, the history of kings, the mighty sovereigns and their victories (and, if need be, their temporary defeats) was to use the continuity of the law to establish a juridical link between those men and power, because power and its workings were a demonstration of the continuity of the law itself. History's other role was to use the almost unbearable intensity of the glory of power, its examples and its exploits, to fascinate men. The yoke of the law and the luster of glory appear to me to be the two things historical discourse strives to use to reinforce power. Like rituals, coronations, funerals, ceremonies, and legendary stories, history is an operator of power, an intensifier of power. It seems to me that in the Middle Ages, the twofold function of historical discourse can be found on

its three traditional axes. The genealogical axis spoke of the antiquity of kingdoms, brought great ancestors back to life, and rediscovered the heroes who Founded empires and dynasties. The goal of this "genealogical" task was to ensure that the greatness of the events or men of the past could guarantee the value of the present, and transform its pettiness and mundanity into something equally heroic and equally legitimate. This genealogical axis of history-which we find mainly in forms of historical narratives about ancient kingdoms and great ancestors-must proclaim right to be something ancient; it must demonstrate the uninterrupted nature of the right of the sovereign and, therefore, the ineradicable force that he still possesses in the present day. Genealogy must, finally, also magnify the name of kings and princes with all the fame that went before them. Great kings found, then, the right of the sovereigns who succeed them, and they transmit their luster to the pettiness of their successors. We might call this the genealogical function of historical narratives. Then there is the memorialization function, which we find not in stories of antiquity or in the resurrection of ancient kings and heroes, but in the annals and chronicles that were kept day by day and year by year throughout history itself. The annalists' practice of permanently recording history also serves to reinforce power. It too is a sort of ritual of power; it shows that what sovereigns and kings do is never pointless, futile, or petty, and never unworthy of being narrated. Everything they do can be, and deserves to be, spoken of and must be remembered in perpetuity, which means that the slightest deed or action of a king can and must be turned into a dazzling action and an exploit. At the same time, each of his decisions is inscribed in a sort of law for his subjects and an obligation for his successors. History, then, makes things memorable and, by making them memorable, inscribes deeds in a discourse that constrains and immobilizes minor actions in monuments that will turn them to stone and render them, so to speak, present forever. The third function of a history that intensifies power is to put examples into circulation. An example is a living law or a resuscitated law; it makes it possible to judge the present, and to make it submit to a stronger law. An example is, so to speak, glory made law; it is the law functioning in the luster of a name. It is because it associates the law and the luster with a name that an example has the force of-and functions as-a sort of punctual element that helps to reinforce power. Binding and dazzling, subjugating, subjugating by imposing obligations and intensifying the luster of force: it seems to me that these are, very schematically, the two functions that we find in the various forms of history, as practiced both in Roman civilization and in the societies of the Middle Ages. Now, these two functions correspond very closely to two aspects of power, as represented in religions, rituals, and Roman legends, and more generally in Indo-European leg ends. In the Indo-European system of representing power,2 power always has two aspects or two Faces, and they are perpetually conjugated. On the one hand, the juridical aspect: power uses obligations, oaths, commitments, and the law to bind; on the other, power has a magical function, role, and efficacy: power dazzles, and power petrifies. Jupiter, that eminently divine representative of power, the pre eminent god of the first function and the first order in the Indo-European tripartite system, is both the god who binds and the god who hurls thunderbolts. Well, I believe that history, as it still functioned in the Middle Ages, with its antiquarian research, its lax to-day chronicles, and its circulating collections of examples, was, still this same representation of power. It is not simply an image of power, but also a way of reinvigorating it. History is the discourse of power, the discourse of the obligations power uses to subjugate. It is also the dazzling discourse that power uses to fascinate, terrorize, and immobilize. In a word, power both binds and immobilizes, and is both the founder and guarantor of order; and history is precisely the discourse that intensifies and makes more efficacious the twin functions that guarantee order. In general terms, we can therefore say that until a very late stage in our society, history was the history of sovereignty, or a history that was deployed in the dimension and function of sovereignty. It is a "Jupiterian" history. In that sense, there was; still a direct continuity between the historical practice of the Middle Ages and the history of the Romans, history as

recounted by the Roman, Livy's history3 or that of the early annalists. This means that medieval historians never saw any difference, discontinuity, or break: between Roman history and their own history, the history they were recounting. The continuity between the historical practice of the Middle Ages, and that of Roman society runs deeper still to the extent that the historical narratives of the Romans, like those of the Middle Ages, had a certain political function. History was a ritual that reinforced sovereignty. Although this is no more than a crude sketch, it does, I think, provide a starting point for our attempt to reconstruct and characterize what is specific about the new form of discourse that appeared precisely at the very end of the Middle Ages or, really, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Historical discourse was no longer the discourse of sovereignty, or even race, but a discourse about races, about a confrontation between races, about the race struggle that goes on within nations and within laws. To that extent it is, I think, a history that is the complete antithesis of the history of sovereignty, as constituted up to that time. This is the first non-Roman or anti-Roman history that the West had ever known. Why is it anti-Roman and why is it a counterhistory, compared to the ritual of sovereignty I was telling you about a moment ago? For a number of reasons which we can easily identify. First, because in this history of races and of the permanent confrontation that goes on between races, beneath and through laws, we see the appearance, or rather the disappearance, of the implicit identification of people with monarch, and nation with sovereign, that the history of sovereignty-and sovereigns-had made apparent. Henceforth, in this new type of discourse and historical practice, sovereignty no longer binds everything together into a unity -which is of course the unity of the City, the nation, or the State. Sovereignty has a specific function. It does not bind; it enslaves. The postulate that the history of great men contains, a fortiori, the history of lesser men, or that the history of the strong is also the history of the weal, is replaced by a principle of heterogeneity: The history of some is not the history of others. It will be discovered, or at least asserted, that the history of the Saxons after their defeat at the Battle of Hastings is not the same as the history of the Normans who were the victors in that same battle. It will he learned that one man's victory is another man's defeat. The victory of the Franks and Clovis must also be read, conversely, as the defeat, enserfment, and enslavement of the Gallo-Romans. What looks like right, law, or obligation from the point of view of power looks like the abuse of power, violence, and exaction when it is seen from the viewpoint of the new discourse, just as it does when we go over to the other side. After all, the fact that the land is in the possession of great feudal lords, and the fact that they are demanding all these taxes, will look to the defeated populations like acts of violence, confiscations, pillage, and war taxes that are being levied through violence. As a result, the great form of the general obligation, whose form was intensified by a history that magnified the glory of the sovereign, is undone, and, the law comes to he seen as a Janus-faced reality: the triumph of some means the submission of others. In that sense, the history that appears at this point, or the history of the race struggle, is a counterhistory. But I think it is also a counterhistory in a different and more important sense. Not only does this counterhistory break up the unity of the sovereign law that imposes obligations; it also breaks the continuity of glory, into the bargain. It reveals that the light-the famous dazzling effect of power is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive-light that: illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into the darkness. And the history - or counterhistory - that is born of the story of the race struggle will of course speak from the side that is in darkness, from within the shadows. It will be, the discourse of those who have no glory, or of those who have lost it and who now find themselves, perhaps for a time-but probably for a long time-in darkness and silence. Which mean, that this, discourse-unlike the uninterrupted ode in which power perpetuated itself, and grew stronger by displaying its antiquity and its genealogy-will be a disruptive speech, an appeal: "We do not have any continuity behind us; me do not have behind us the great and glorious

genealogy in which the law and power flaunt themselves in their power and their glory. We came out of the shadows, we had no glory and we had no rights, and that is why we are beginning to speak: and to tell of our history." This way of speaking related this type of discourse not so much to the search for the great uninterrupted jurisprudence of a long-established power, as to a sort of prophetic rupture. This also means that this new discourse is similar to a certain number of epic, religious, or mythical forms which, rather than telling of the untarnished and uneclipsed glory of the sovereign, endeavor to formulate the misfortune of ancestors, exiles, and servitude. It will enumerate not so much victories, as the defeats to which we have to submit during our long wait for the promised land and the fulfillment of the old promises that will of course reestablish both the rights of old and the glory that has been lost. With this new discourse of race struggle, we see the emergence of something that, basically, is much closer to the mythico-religious discourse of the Jews than to the politico-legendary history of the Romans. We are much closer to the Bible than to Livy, in a Hebraic biblical form much more than in the form of the annalist who records, day by day, the history and the uninterrupted glory of power. I think that, in general terms, it must not be forgotten that, at least from the second half of the Middle Ages onward-, the Bible was the great form for the articulation of religious, moral, and political protests against the power of kings and the despotism of the church. Like the reference to biblical texts itself, this form functioned, in most cases, as a protest, a critique, and an oppositional discourse. In the Middle Ages, Jerusalem was always a protest against all the Babylons that had come back to life; it was a protest against eternal Rome, against the Rome of the Caesars, against the Rome that shed the blood of the innocent in the circus. The Bible was the weapon of poverty and insurrection; it was the word that made men rise up against the law and against glory, against the unjust law of kings and the beautiful glory of the Church. To that extent, it is not surprising that we see, at the end of the Middle Ages, in the sixteenth century, in the period of the Reformation, and at the time of the English Revolution, the appearance of a form of history that is a direct challenge to the history of sovereignty and kings-to Roman history-and that we see a new history that is articulated around the great biblical form of prophecy and promise. The historical discourse that appears at this point can therefore be regarded as a counterhistory that challenges Roman history for this reason: in this new historical discourse, the function of memory acquires a whole new meaning. In Roman-style history, the function of memory was essentially to ensure that nothing was forgotten-or in other words, to preserve the law and perpetually to enhance the luster of power for so long as it endured. The new history that now emerges, in contrast, has to disinter something that has been hidden, and which has been hidden not only because it has been neglected, but because it has been carefully, deliberately, and wickedly misrepresented. Basically, what the new history is trying to show is that power, the mighty, the kings, and the laws have concealed the fact that they were born of the contingency and injustice of battles. After all, William the Conqueror did not want to be called "the conqueror," for he wanted to conceal the fact that the rights he exercised, or the,-violence he was inflicting on England, were the rights of conquest. He wanted to be seen as the legitimate dynastic successor and therefore hid the name of "conqueror," just as' Clovis, alter all, wandered around with a parchment in his hand to make people believe that he owed his royalty to the fact that he had been recognized as king by some Roman Caesar or other. These unjust and biased kings tried to make it look as though they were acting on behalf of all and in the name of all: they certainly wanted people to talk of their victories, but they did not, wart it to be known that their victories were someone else's defeats: "It was our defeat." The role of history will then be to show that laws deceive, that kings wear masks, that power creates illusions, and that historians tell lies. This will not, then, be a history of continuity, but a history of the deciphering, the detection of the secret. of the outwitting of the ruse, and of the reappropriation of a know-ledge that has been distorted or buried. It will decipher a truth that has been sealed. I think, finally, that this history of

the race struggle that appears in the sixteenth' and seventeenth centuries is a counterhistory in a different sense too. It is a counterhistory in a simpler or more elementary sense, but also in a stronger sense. The point is that, Far from being a ritual inherent in the exercise, deployment, and reinforcement of power, it is not only a critique of power, but also an attack on it and a demand. Power is unjust not because it has forfeited its noblest examples, but quite simply because it does not belong to us. In one Sense, it can be said that this new history, like the old, is indeed an attempt to speak of a right that survives the vicissitudes of time. But its goal is not to establish the great, long jurisprudence of a power that has always retained its rights, or to demonstrate that power is where it is, and that it has always been where it is now. It is to demand rights that have not been recognized, or in other words, to declare war by declaring rights. Historical discourse of the Roman type pacifies society, justifies power, and founds the order-or the order of the three orders-that constitutes the social body. In contrast, the discourse I am telling you about, and which is deployed in the late sixteenth century, and which can be described as a biblical-style historical discourse, tears society apart and speaks of legitimate rights solely in order to declare war on laws. I would like to sum all this up by advancing a sort of hypothesis. Can we not say that until the end of the Middle Ages and perhaps beyond that point, we had a history-a historical discourse and practice-that was one of the great discursive rituals of sovereignty, of a sovereignty that both revealed and constituted itself through history as a unitary sovereignty that was legitimate, uninterrupted, and dazzling. Another history now begins to challenge it: the counterhistory of dark servitude and forfeiture. This is the counterhistory of prophecy and promise, the counterhistory of the secret knowledge that has to he rediscovered and deciphered. This, finally, is the counterhistory of the twin and simultaneous declaration of war and of rights. Roman- style history was basically profoundly inscribed within the Indoeuropean system of representing power, and of power's workings; it was certainly bound up with the organization of the three orders, at whose pinnacle stood the order of sovereignty, and it therefore rebound up with a certain domain of objects and certain types of figures - with legends about heroes and kings - because it was the discourse of a Janus-faced sovereignty that was at once magical and juridical. This history, based on a Roman model and Indo-European functions, now finds itself being constrained by a biblical, almost Hebraic, history which, ever since the end of the Middle Ages, has been the discourse of rebellion and prophecy, of knowledge and of the call for the violent overthrow of the order of things. Unlike the historical discourse of Indo European societies, this new discourse is no longer bound up with a ternary order, but with a binary perception and division of society and men; them and us, the unjust and the just, the masters and those who must obey them, the rich and the poor, the mighty and those who have to work in order to live, those who invade lands and those who tremble before them, the despots and the groaning people, the men of today's law and those of the homeland of the future. It was in the middle of the Middle Ages that Petrarch asked what I see as a fairly astonishing or at least fundamental question. He asked: "Is there nothing more to history than the praise of Rome?"' I think: that in asking this question, he characterized in a word what had always been the actual practice of history, not only in Roman society,. but also in the medieval society to which Petrarch himself belonged. A few centuries alter Petrarch, the West saw the appearance or birth of a history that contained the very opposite of the praise of Rome. This was, by contrast, a history that sought to unmask Rome as a new Babylon, and which challenged Rome by demanding the lost rights of Jerusalem. A very different form of history and a historical discourse with a very different function had come into being. One might say that this history is the beginning of the end of Indo-European historicity, by which I mean the end of a certain Indo-European mode of talking about and perceiving history. Ultimately, we might say that antiquity ended with the birth of the great historical discourse on race war - and by antiquity I mean that awareness of being in continuity with antiquity that existed until the late Middle Ages. The Middle Ages was, obviously, unaware of being the Middle Ages. But it was also unaware, so to

speak, that it was not, or was no longer, antiquity. Rome was still present, and functioned as a sort of permanent and contemporary historical presence in the Middle Ages. Rome was perceived as having been divided into a thousand channels that flowed through Europe, but all these channels led, it was believed, back to Rome. It must not he forgotten that all the national (or prenational) political histories that were being written at this time always took as their starting point a certain Trojan myth. All the nations of Europe claimed to have been born of the fall of Troy. Being born of the fall of Troy meant that all the nations, all the States, and all the monarchies of Europe could claim to be Rome's sisters. The French monarchy, for instance, was supposed to be descended from Francus, and the English monarchy from a certain Brutus. All these great dynasties claimed the sons of Priam as their ancestors, and that guaranteed a link of- genealogical kinship with ancient Rome. As late as the fifteenth century, a sultan of Constantinople could write to the doge of Venice: "Why should we wage war on one another, when we are brothers? It is well known that the Turks were born of, or emerged from, the burning of Troy, and that they too are descended from Priam." It was, he said, well known that the Turks were descended from Turcus, who, like Aeneas and Francus, was the son of Priam. Rome is, then, present within the historical consciousness of the Middle Ages, and there is no break: between Rome and the countless kingdoms that we see appearing from the fifth and sixth centuries onward. Now what the discourse of race struggle will reveal is precisely the kind of break that will relegate to a different world something that will come to look like an antiquity: we have a new awareness of a break that had not previously been recognized. The European consciousness begins to notice events that had previously been no more than minor incidents which had basically not damaged the great unity, the great strength, the great legitimacy, and the great, dazzling strength of Rome. It begins to notice the events which will [then] constitute Europe's real beginnings, its bloody beginnings. It began with conquest, with the Frankish invasion and the Norman invasion. Something that will be specifically individualized as "the Middle Ages" begins to appear [and it will be only in the early eighteenth century- that historical consciousness will isolate this phenomenon and call it feudalism]. New characters appear: the Franks, the Gauls, and the Celts; more general characters such as the peoples of the North and the peoples of the South also begin to appear; rulers and subordinates, the victors and die vanquished begin to appear. It is they who now enter the theater of historical discourse and who now constitute its primary reference. Europe becomes populated by memories and ancestors whose genealogy it had never before written. A very different historical consciousness emerges and is formulated through this discourse on the race-struggle and the call for its revival. To that extent, we can identify the appearance of discourses on race war with a very different organization of time in Europe's consciousness, practice, and even its politics. Having established that, I would to make a certain number of comments. First, I would like to stress the fact that it would be a mistake to regard this discourse on race struggle as belonging, rightfully and completely, to the oppressed, or to say that it was, at least originally, the discourse of the enslaved, the discourse of the people, or a history that was claimed and spoken by the people. It should in tam he immediately obyious that it is a discourse that ha, a great ability to circulate, a great aptitude for metamorphosis, or a sort of strategic polyvalence. It is true that we see it taking shape at least initially perhaps, in the eschatological themes or myths that developed together with the popular movements of the second half of the Middle Ages. But it has to be noted that we very quickly - immediately - find it in the form of historical scholarship, popular fiction, and cosmobiological speculations. For a long time it was an oppositional discourse; circulating very quickly from one oppositional group to another, it was a critical instrument to he used in the struggle against a form of power, but it was shared by different enemies or different forms of opposition to that power. We see it beeing used, in various forms, by radical English thought at the time of the seventeenth century revolution. A few year-s later, we see the French aristocratic reaction using it against the power of Louis XIV, and it has scarcely been transformed at

all. In the early nineteenth century, it was obviously bound up with the postrevolutionary project of at last writing a history whose real subject is the people. But a few years later, we can see it being used to disqualify colonized subraces. This is, then, a mobile discourse, a polyvalent discourse. Although its origins lie in the Middle Ages, it is not so marked by them that it can have only one political meaning. Second comment: Although this discourse speaks of races, and although the term "race" appears at a very early stage, it is quite obvious that the word "race" itself is not pinned to a stable biological meaning. And yet the word is not completely free-floating. Ultimately, it designates a certain historico-political divide. It is no doubt wide, but it is relatively stable. One might say-and this discourse does say-that two races exist whenever one writes the history of two groups which do not, at least to begin with, have the same language or, in many cases, the same religion. The two groups form a unity and a single polity only as a result of wars, invasions, victories, and defeats, or in other words, acts of violence. The only link between them is the link established by the violence of war. And finally, we can say that two races exist when there are two groups which, although they coexist, have not become mixed because of the differences, dissymmetries, and barriers created by privileges, customs and rights, the distribution of wealth, or the way in which power is exercised. Third comment: We can, therefore, recognize that historical discourse has two great morphologies, two main centers, and two political functions. On the one hand, the Roman history of sovereignty; on the other, the biblical history of servitude and exiles. I do not think that the difference between these two histories is precisely the same as the difference between an official discourse and, let us say, a rustic discourse, or a discourse that is so conditioned by political imperatives that it is incapable of producing a knowledge. This history, which set itself the task of deciphering power's secrets and demystifying it, did in fact produce at least as much knowledge as the history that tried to reconstruct the great uninterrupted jurisprudence of power. I think that we might even go so far as to say that it removed a lot of obstacles, and that the fertile moments in the constitution of historical knowledge in Europe can, roughly, be situated at the moment when the history of sovereignty suddenly intruded upon the history of the race war. In the early century in England, for instance, the discourse that told of invasions and of the great injustices done to the Saxons by the Normans intruded upon all the historical work that the monarchist jurists were undertaking in order to recount the uninterrupted history of the power of the kings of England. It was the intersection between these two historical practices that led to the explosion of a whole field of knowledge,. Similarly, when at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, the French nobility began to write its -genealogy not in the form of a continuity but in the form of the privileges it once enjoyed, which it then lost and which it wanted to win-in back, all the historical research that was being done on that axis intruded upon the historiography of the French monarchy instituted by Louis XIV, and there was once more a considerable expansion of historical knowledge. For similar reasons, there was another fertile moment at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the history of the people, of its servitude and its enslavement, the history of the Gauls and the Franks, of the peasants and the Third Estate, intruded upon the juridical history of regimes. So the clash between the history- of sovereignty and the history of the race war leads to a perpetual interaction, and to the production of fields of knowledge and of knowledge-contents. Final remark: As a result of - or despite - this interaction, the revolutionary discourse of seventeenth-century England, and that of nineteenth century France and Europe, was on the side of-I almost said biblical history-on the side of history-as-demand, of history-as-insurrection. The idea of revolution, which runs through the entire political workings of the West and the entire history- of the West for more than two hundred years, and whose origins and content are still, as it happens, very enigmatic, cannot, in my view, be dissociated from the emergence and existence of this practice of counterhistory. After all, what could the revolutionary project and the revolutionary idea possibly mean without this preliminary interpretation of the dissymetries, the

disequilibriums, the injustice, and the violence that function despite the order of laws, beneath the order of laws, and through and because of the order of laws? Where would the revolutionary project, the revolutionary idea, or revolutionary practice he without the will to rekindle the real war that once went on and which is still going on, even though the function of the silent order of power is to mask< and smother It. and even though it is in its interest to do so? Where would revolutionary practice, revolutionary discourse, and the revolutionary project be without the will to reactivate that war thanks to a specific historical knowledge? What would they become, if that knowledge were not used as an instrument in the war - that war - as a tactical element in the real war that is being waged? What would the revolutionary project and revolutionary discourse mean if the goal were not a certain, a final, inversion of relations of power and a decisive displacement within the exercise of power? , The interpretation of dissymmetries, the rekindling of a war, the reactivation of the war-there is more than this to the revolutionary discourse that has constantly undermined Europe since at least the end of the nineteenth century, but it is still an important strand within it, and it was shaped, defined, established, and organized in the great counterhistory that began to speak of the race struggle at the end of the Middle Ayes. After all, it should not be forgotten that toward the end of his life, Marx told Engels in a letter written in 1882 that "You know very well where we found our idea of class struggle; we found It in the work of the French historians who talked about the race struggle." The history of the revolutionary project and of revolutionary practice is, I think, indissociable from the counterhistory that broke with the Indo-European form of historical practices, which were bound up with the exercise of sovereignty; it is indissociable from the appearance of the counterhistory of races and of the role played in the West by clashes between races. We might, in a word, say-that at the end of the Middle Ages, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we left, or began to leave, a society whose historical consciousness was still of the Roman type, or which was still centered on the rituals of sovereignty and its myths, and that we then entered a society of-let's say it is of the modern type (given that there is no other word for it and that the word "modern" is devoid of meaning) - a society whose historical consciousness centers not on sovereignty and the problem of its foundation, but on revolution, its promises, and its prophecies of future emancipation. I think this provides us with a starting point for understanding how and why historical discourse could become a new issue in the mid-nineteenth century. At the time when this discourse [...] was, being displaced, translated, or converted into a revolutionary discourse, at the time when the notion of race struggle was about to be replaced by that of class struggle-and in fact, when I say - "the mid-nineteenth century," that's too late; it was in the first halt of the nineteenth century, as it was [Thiers] who transformed race struggle into class struggle-at the time when this conversion was going on, it was in fact only natural that attempts should be made by one side to recode the old counterhistory not in terms of class. but in terms-, of races - races in the biological and medical sense of that term. And it was at the moment when a counterhistory of the revolutionary type was taking shape that another counterhistory began to take shape - but it will he a counterhistory in the sense that it adopts a biologicomedical perspective and crushes the historical dimension that was present in this discourse. You thus see the appearance of what will become actual racism. This racism takes over and reconverts the form and function of the discourse on race struggle, but it distorts them, and it will be characterized by the fact that the theme of historical war with its battles, its invasions, its looting, its victories and its defeats will be replaced by the postevolutionist theme of the struggle for existence. It is no longer a battle in the sense that a warrior would understand the term, but a struggle - in the biological sense: the differentiation of species, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest species. Similarly, the theme of the binary society which is divided into two races or two groups with different languages, laws, and so on will be replaced by that of a society that is, in contrast, biologically monist. Its only problem is this: it is threatened by a

certain number of heterogeneous elements which are not essential to it, which do not divide the social body, or the living body of society, into two parts, and which are in a sense accidental. Hence the idea that foreigners have infiltrated this society, the theme of die deviants who are this society's by-products. The theme of the counterhistory of races was, finally, that the State was necessarily unjust. It is now inverted into its opposite: the State is no longer an instrument that one race uses against another: the State is, and must be, the protector of the integrity, the superiority, and the purity of the race. The idea of racial purity, with all its monistic, Statist, and biological implications: that is what replaces the idea of race struggle. I think that racism is born at the point when the theme of racial purity replaces that of race struggle, and when counterhistory begins to be converted into a biological racism. The connection between racism and antirevolutionary discourse and politics in the West is not, then, accidental; it is not simply an additional ideological edifice that appears at a given moment in a sort of grand antirevolutionary project. At the moment when the discourse of race struggle was being transformed into revolutionary discourse, racism was revolutionary thought. Although they had their roots in the discourse of race struggle, the revolutionary project and revolutionary propheticism now began to take a very different direction. Racism is, quite literally, revolutionary discourse in an inverted form. Alternatively, we could put it this way: Whereas the discourse of races, of the struggle between races, was a weapon to be used against the historico-political discourse of Roman sovereignty, the discourse of race (in the singular) was a way of turning that weapon against those who had forged it, of using it to preserve the sovereignty of the State, a sovereignty whose luster and vigor were no longer guaranteed by magico-juridical rituals, but by medico-normalizing techniques. Thanks to the shift from law to norm, from races in the plural to race in the singular, from the emancipatory project to a concern with purity, sovereignty was able to invest or take over the discourse of race struggle and reutilize it for its own strategy. State sovereignty thus becomes the imperative to protect the race. It becomes both an alternative to and a way of blocking the call for revolution that derived from the old discourse of struggles, interpretations, demands, and promises. I would like, finally, to make one more point. The racism that came into being as a transformation of and an alternative to revolutionary discourse, or the old discourse of race struggle, underwent two further transformations in the twentieth century. At the end of the nineteenth century, we see the appearance of what might be called a State racism, of a biological and centralized racism. And it was this theme that was, if not profoundly modified, at least transformed and utilized in strategies specific to the twentieth century. On the one hand, we have the Nazi transformation, which takes up the theme, established at the end of the nineteenth century, of a State racism that is responsible for the biological protection of the race. This theme is, however, reworked and converted, in a sort of regressive mode, in such a way that it is implanted in and functions within the very prophetic discourse from which the theme of race struggle once emerged. Nazism was thus able to reuse a whole popular, almost medieval, mythology that allowed State racism to function within an ideologico-mythical landscape similar to that of the popular struggles which, at a given moment, could support and make it possible to formulate the theme of race struggle. In the Nazi period, State racism would be accompanied by a whole set of elements and connotations such as, for example, the struggle of a Germanic race which had, temporarily, been enslaved by the European powers, the Slavs, the Treaty of Versailles, and so on which Germany had always regarded as its provisional victors. It was also accompanied by the theme of the return of the hero, or heroes (the reawakening of Frederick, and of all the nation's other guides and Führers; the theme of the revival of an ancestral war; that of the advent of a new Reich, of the empire of the last days which will ensure the millenarian victory of the race, but which also means that the inevitable apocalypse and the inevitable last days are nigh. We have then a Nazi reinscription or reinsertion of State racism in the legend of warring races. In contrast to the Nazi transformation, you have a Soviet-style transformation which consists in doing,

so to speak, just the opposite. This is not a dramatic or theatrical transformation, but a surreptitious transformation. It does not use the dramaturgy of legends, and it is diffusely "scientific." It consists in reworking the revolutionary dis-course of social struggles-the very discourse that derived so many of its elements from the old discourse of the race struggle-and articulating it with the management and the policing that ensure the hygiene of an orderly society. In Soviet State racism, what revolutionary discourse designated as the class enemy becomes a sort of biological threat. So, who is the class enemy now? Well, it's the sick, the deviant, the madman. As a result, the weapon that was once used in the struggle against the class enemy (the weapon of war, or possibly the dialectic and conviction) is now wielded by a medical police which eliminates class enemies as though they were racial enemies. We have then, on the one hand, the Nazi reinscription of State racism in the old legend of warring classes, and on the other, the Soviet reinscription of the class struggle within the silent mechanisms of a State racism. And the hoarse songs of the races that clashed in battles over the lies of laws and kings, and which were after all the earliest form of revolutionary discourse, become the administrative prose of a State that defends itself in the name of a social heritage that has to be kept pure. So, the glory and the infamy of the discourse of races in struggle. What I have been trying to show you is that this is discourse that definitively detached us from a historico juridical consciousness cen-tered on sovereignty, and introduced us into a form of history, a form of time that can be both dreamed of and known, both dreamed of and understood, and in which the question of power can no longer be dissociated from that of servitude, liberation, and emancipation. Petrarch asked if there was anything more to history than the praise of Rome. And we ask - and this is no doubt typical of our historical consciousness and is no doubt bound up with the appearance of this counterhistory: "Is there anything more to history than the call for revolution, and the fear of revolution?" And let me simply add this question: "And what if Rome once more conquered the revolution?" So after these digressions, I will try, beginning next time, to take another look at certain aspects of the history of the discourse on races from the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth and then the twentieth centuries. 28 January 1976

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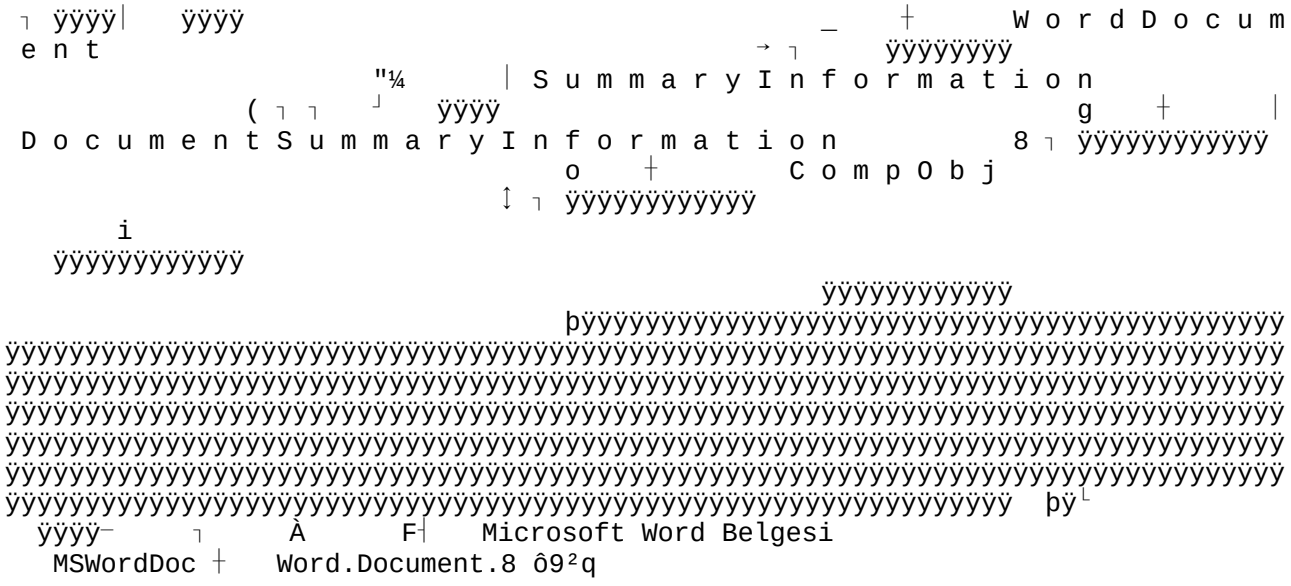
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